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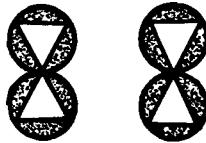
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Revelation



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Number Three of a Series of Seven
THE QUEST FOR WISDOM
(The Seven Quests of man)

Beloved Companion:

In the most ancient days of the Mayans, wisdom in all its manifestations was revered and studied as the gift of The Great Spirit speaking through man. The One God, The Omnipotent Father, the All-Wise Creator was the giver of wisdom to those who sought it, and the Mayan name for The Great Spirit was Hun-ab-ku.

As you have learned in your Mayan studies, all advanced civilizations reach a certain high point in greatness - and then they fall. It is like the blooming of a rose whose greatest beauty comes when it is full-blown. The greater the degree of its advancement the more sure its decline, seems to be the law for the earth's great civilizations; at least it was so with the Mayans of old.

The reasons are manifold, but the chief reason seems to be that in any given civilization only a few gain the real wisdom; many gain some of the knowledge (but only a little wisdom) and the majority learn only how to take their ease, a little knowledge and no wisdom.

If the Mayans of old had been a mechanistic civilization such as ours, their downfall might have been hastened. Had they lolled in motorcars on their superb highways, they would have been a softer people. Every great civilization has provided the seeds of its own destruction, usually the softening influence of ease, of luxury, or, as an example, the eager scholar who in his zeal to develop his mental side neglects his physical being.

We are even today surrounded by hostile, savage peoples, death-dealing germs, many and various organisms within and without, ready to prey on any weakened body, ready to enter any portal and destroy or consume softened (over-civilized?) bodies, whether personal or the body politic.

The ancient wise-ones who called themselves Mayans, were "the not many". They raised up a mighty and a great civilization from among the surrounding savages. But as their civilization increased and prospered, the bloodline grew thin. After a time, although perhaps millions called themselves Mayans, only a handful could trace an undiluted bloodline.

Real civilization is a state where, among other things, wars are not waged.

The Maya less and less frequently indulged in war. Their near neighbors also dwelt in peace to a considerable degree. Their more distant neighbors however still waged war against their still farther-off neighbors, out and out in widening circles to the area of savagery.

The Knowledge and the Wisdom of the Mayans of old similarly spread in widening circles, and thinned out as it spread. In our civilization, Einstein is acknowledged the great genius of our age. He has held a post as teacher of mathematics for years at Princeton University. It is correct to say that, through these years, he has honestly endeavored to teach Princeton students all he knows. A few have grasped a part of his teaching. Some of them have tried and will try to teach others. But with each passing on of knowledge there is a mathematical percentage of loss of the Einstein discoveries and wisdoms.

It is like dropping a stone into a calm lake, the ripples circle out and out, but in steadily diminishing force. These ripple impulses may extend on to circle the earth, but the farther they are from the original impulse the less apparent they become. The inertia of the large body of the lake seems to absorb and swallow up the original impulse. More than that, it levels out the original energy.

The jungle, many miles beyond direct contact with the Maya, heard something of their wisdoms and The Great Spirit the Maya worshiped. But as they believed in small gods and minor special spirits and even idols, and not having the full MAYAN understanding (but only the ripples) they superimposed The Great Spirit and the minor gods as their religion. The Maya grew soft and civilized, the jungle remained hard.

As these warlike tribes encroached and conquered and looted the cities of the gentle Maya, they killed out more and more of the enlightened ones and, in the usual spirit of barbarous conquerors, enforced their religion upon the conquered ones.

This "return of the jungle" was well nigh completed when Columbus sailed on the voyage that was to discover America. Cortez and other Europeans completed the loss of ancient American greatness. Wisdom was in eclipse, but was not lost. It was an old story repeated again.

All the ancient languages had words equivalent to our word, "Wisdom", and it is to be feared that most of the peoples who spoke them used it more. Among us in this day it seems a rather neglected word, and it needs to be taken off the shelf, dusted off and put to more regular use. To encourage the doing of that is the purpose of this lesson.

Even when the word "Wisdom" is used, or the word "Wise" is applied to someone, it is done so loosely and carelessly as to indicate that not too many of us really know what it means. Naturally, if we are going on a quest for it the first thing to do is to try to get some definite idea of what it means. A word of such profound meaning is hard to define, and any definition we set up may fall short of perfection, but we can make an approach.

Wisdom is not knowledge. It is possible to know a very great many facts without being wise and there are people who make very wise use of a limited number of facts they know. Knowledge is one of the chief materials wisdom uses, but they are no more identical than are the apothecary and his chemicals. One who has these

materials and makes no use of them is not wise. Too, it is wiser to make use of a little than to fail to make use of much.

St. James wrote in the New Testament that we should be DOERS of the word, i.e., the truth, and not hearers only. The truth is no good unless and until it is acted upon. Knowledge is not something to accumulate, but to DO something about. The man who possesses knowledge is learned. The man who understands its significance and knows what to do about it is WISE.

All you need to have to accumulate knowledge is a good memory, but wisdom requires something more. It requires judgment by which to appraise what you know, decide what is most important, and determine the appropriate ACTION. If one cannot get on well in the living of his life he is not wise. That involves two things - knowing what is true and knowing what to do about it. Knowledge lights the path, like "Kin" the Eye of Day, but wisdom travels it.

In testing people for the I. Q., or intelligence quotient, we meet with the surprising fact that it does not change much after the period from fifteen to eighteen years of age. That is because we are not testing for wisdom, or even for knowledge, but rather for the capacity for them. A sixteen year old boy might pass a better I. Q. test than a man who had lived fifty years, but he probably would not be able to match him in judgment and rightness of decision. That is because if one has lived successfully at all for fifty years he has gathered some knowledge, and time and experience have seasoned his judgment in using it. The Binet Scale may indicate abilities and qualities that can implement wisdom, but not wisdom itself.

There is more to wisdom, however, than even this. It takes tribute from powers that are quite beyond the known senses. One of its phases is insight, that indefinable X-Ray power by which the mind searches out hidden meanings and values. Even those who possess it would have a hard time explaining what it is or how it works, but we all meet people who seem to have its deeper understanding. The teacher seeks to develop it in the student, because when once it is acquired in a given subject there is no longer any question but that the subject can be mastered.

All this helps mightily to implement that handmaiden of wisdom, the subconscious mind. The power of that mysterious mental function to give or tell us what we ask seems well nigh unlimited. Probably no one can be rightly called wise until he learns how to use it well, and one who scorns this MIRACLE POWER which he possesses cuts himself off from the very possibility of wisdom until he learns better.

The New Testament says true wisdom comes from above, so it may be that insight and subconscious understanding are forces set in motion by the Creator Himself. If so, one should receive his gifts all the more humbly and try all the more earnestly to use them rightly.

We might say, then, that wisdom is the heavenly breath of life breathed into the lifeless clay of knowledge. That is the difference that sets apart the man who knows, the man who understands, and the man who both knows and understands.

Many are always engaged in the quest for knowledge. At least some are always engaged in the quest for wisdom. The first will seek out the way of progress. The second will help the race to find the way to tread the path of progress safely and well.

The Orient, like the ancient Maya, has always concentrated its attention on the things of the spirit, with a great deal of emphasis on the acquiring of wisdom. The Occident has given its thought more to development in the physical sciences and the material progress they make possible. Now it looks as though these two viewpoints are beginning to blend. Certainly each would be benefited by some mingling of the other, and most certainly material progress needs the light of wisdom to guide it on its way.

Before starting to erect a building one must clear away the trash and the rubbish, and before starting to cultivate a field one must cut the briars and weeds. There is PREPARATORY work to do before one is ready to begin building the temple of wisdom or cultivating the field of wisdom. One of the chief reasons why we neglect wisdom in the Western world is our preoccupation with "things". We must somehow get rid of that preoccupation first.

To do so is not easy because our material civilization lays burdens and responsibilities on us and creates preoccupations of necessity which are very insistent. It may seem to require all our time to make a living or accomplish other demanding aims. The answer may be that if we acquired wisdom we could make a living in less time and with more ease than now. Perhaps we are doing some of these things the hard way, and wisdom might help us find a better way by which we could accomplish even more and render even better service. Neglecting the search for wisdom seems too much like neglecting to let in enough fresh air to keep healthy. It is not one of the dispensables. It is a necessity, and a chief one at that. It might pay to seek it even at the cost of some material sacrifice. It is not good anyway to lay waste all our powers in getting and spending.

So cut down your preoccupations as much as you can, and finally eliminate them all as soon as you can. The quest for wisdom cannot be put low in the list of interests. It has to be made a prior claim. Jesus said people would prosper MORE if they would seek first the Kingdom of God, and make material values secondary. Certainly wisdom is a phase of the Kingdom of God. It is an investment that yields a good return.

As you pursue wisdom you will find freedom. We are told that if we know the truth it will make us free. Truth is the material with which wisdom deals. Truth is more than fact as the message of a book is more than the materials of which it is made or the single sentences of which its message is composed. Truth is the highest level in which the mind can work, and the person who anchors his life to it is safe and secure.

There is much wisdom in many books, but not in all books nor in all parts of most books that seem wise. Many people stray from the path of wisdom by acquiring the habit of reading many books indiscriminately and believing everything they say. This is bad in two ways. One way is that in doing so one accepts so much of the chaff of untruth with the few grains of truth that may be there. The other is that such dependency on the thoughts and opinions of others is mentally weakening. If you did no thinking for yourself for awhile, you would lose much of your power to think for yourself. It is a good thing to know what others have said, but when it comes to making up your mind you should always do that for yourself. You are a judge on the bench, and the books you read are the witnesses giving their evidence. That evidence you must evaluate, and from it form your own decision.

Therefore read discriminately. Weigh what you read, and accept it if it seems well supported. Be well read if you can, but always see to it that you are greater than what you read. If you find a vein of wisdom, make the most of it, but assay it and wash out the clay of error before you begin using it. Never get the idea that any author is all-wise. He too is human, and he may even be too human. Prove what you read. Keep the significant and the true, and throw out the rest.

Also, do not be entrapped by winsome personalities into accepting their opinions just because you are dazzled and impressed. While you are under the spell of an appealing personality everything he says seems like an oracle's assertion, but when you appraise it afterward you may find that it had little or no value.

Thomas Jefferson once went to hear a speech by a noted orator of his day. During the speech he was almost overcome with admiration and enthusiasm. When he got home he tried to review the speech in his mind, and found that he could not remember a single thing the man had said. The speech had been only words. There was not enough significance to engage even so great a mind as Jefferson's. One must try to avoid that human tendency. It works against our attainment of wisdom.

This is peculiarly important in times like this, because ours is an age of political and spiritual propaganda and propagandists. Many of them are very skillful and they appeal to us through very powerful media. It is easy to be swept away by some of their deceptive claims, only to find later that we have been grinding the axe of the wrong woodsman. Wisdom does not follow each new popular movement. It is above them. It finds the TRUTH and STAYS WITH IT. It is not moved by the propounders of Will O'the Wisp ideologies. When you hear a demagogue of a new ideology, at least subject what he has to say to the standards of universal truth. That will greatly help to calm the sea of selfish causes, the waves of which are sweeping all around the world.

Learn what you can of the lives and teachings of the wise. You will find in every land and age some who made wisdom their chief aim and who went far toward attaining it. They are wonderful companions, and you can have their companionship through the stories of their lives and teachings. You will find some of them in Plutarch's lives. You will find them scattered through the histories of the various periods. You will hear them speaking in the various scriptures of the world. The Hebrew and Christian scriptures are especially rich in them. You will meet them in the great civilizations of time - Chinese, Greek, Roman, Persian, Mayan and the others.

Buddha spent his life seeking and attaining wisdom. Confucius, Mencius and Laotse left treasures of wisdom that never grow old. Solomon found his way deeply into truth and wisdom. Countless saints and sages have helped the world think its way toward freedom and peace. Sit at their feet by reading their counsels and thinking about them. Let the only condition for seeking out their thoughts be whether they were true, and wise, and good. Give a hearing to as many of them as you can, and remember that they were all on the same quest in which you are engaged. Think of them as having blazed trails so you could follow them. Judge them by their wisdom, and not by their names, races, times or systems.

Still again reserve your right to discriminate. Do not expect each to be right all the time. That is too much. Even the world's sages are human beings, and for human beings the fires of wisdom burn sometimes more brightly and sometimes less,

and sometimes they can express their inspirations well and sometimes not so well.

In following the words of any teacher, old or new, accept what seems true and good. Reserve the rest for further consideration and testing. Someday you may be able to accept it, or may find that it proves out. That is soon enough to make your final decision, and to reject it if careful thought and investigation have not supported it. Such was the instruction of St. Paul when he wrote, "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good."

This very process of discrimination and choice will strengthen your comprehension and your powers to make clear and wise distinctions. The power to recognize truth and untruth when you see them is a part of wisdom itself, if the choosing is done with fairness and appreciation and not in the dogmatic spirit. Dogmatism judges things by the letter and not by the spirit, and we have been told that "the letter killeth, but the spirit maketh alive."

In the quest for wisdom, as in every other quest for spiritual values, meditation is of essential importance. Keep to your program of silent contemplation, whatever you have to leave undone. Truth is like any other friend, inasmuch as you cannot neglect it and keep it. It is something with which you must be much alone, and with which you must commune often. Since its language is that of silence, that is the way the communion must be carried on. Minds that have grown up into the eternal levels have done so in their hours of silent contemplation.

This does not mean one should be a solitary person. Life has to be lived on the highway and in the marketplace, but the power and wisdom to live it has to be acquired in the garden, on the mountainside, or behind the closed door. Just now the ivory tower of contemplation is sneered at a great deal, but souls will not grow great without one to which they may retire at least now and then.

The inner life runs on a "battery". Batteries will run down and have to be recharged. Silence is the battery-recharging of the mind, as prayer is for the soul, and sleep or rest for the body. Don't try to keep the battery going all the time on the crowded highways of life. Slip aside regularly and replenish its power.

Do not let these silences be aimless. If they are aimless they will be of no value. Enter into meditation for a purpose, and pursue that purpose. Have a definite question, or phase of truth, or desired quality in mind, and keep your meditation centered on it. If you do it properly, you will find your mental powers working better, and finally beginning to penetrate to the things you are seeking.

We say that in psychology there are four stages of creative effort, whether it be a book to be written, a problem to be solved, a task to be mastered, or a machine to be invented. First there is a period of Preparation during which the mind gets on the trail of the situation to be worked out. Then comes a period of Incubation, during which the idea germinates and starts growing in the conscious or subconscious mental level, or both. Then comes a time of Illumination, during which the whole matter seems to take form and adjust itself in a clear light. Finally comes the stage of Verification, during which the discovery is worked out and put to the test. Probably any advance along the way of wisdom, or in anything involving wisdom, would follow some such course.

Gauge your progress toward the object chosen, and never cease your effort

until you have given your inner powers a chance to go all the way. Probably the world loses much because some questers after wisdom and its works stop short of the last stages in the necessary process. One accomplishes nothing important short of the period of illumination, and it takes the process of verification to see whether the illumination is real.

Watch your intuitive flashes, the little star-bursts in your brain. They seem to come from nowhere, but they come very definitely from somewhere. They are signals from the subconscious mind, and the wisdom of that mind is vast. It has no other way of calling to you, so now and then it lights up some area of life and truth just as one might suddenly turn the light on a picture in a dark corner. These experiences do not happen without a purpose. If you will give them immediate attention you will be well repaid.

The attention must be prompt because these impressions of truth, these little nudges toward wisdom, do not last long. They are quickly and easily forgotten because they lack the advantage of the memory mechanism of the conscious mind. If you cannot do anything about them at the moment make careful records of them and act as soon as you can. These so-called hunches are the help the Universe is trying to give you in your quest for wisdom. You are honored in having them. They indicate that you are fit and worthy to receive them. That is all the more reason for watching them, interpreting them with care, and following their leadings faithfully.

Have you read the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament lately? Every quester for wisdom should know that book and refresh his acquaintance with it now and then. From the twentieth verse to the end of the first chapter we read a plea by Wisdom in which she cries out and asks people why they permit themselves to lose her benefits. From the thirteenth to the twenty-sixth verses of the third chapter we read the reasons why it is a happy thing for one to find Wisdom. We are told that length of days is in her right hand and in her left are riches and honor; that her ways are those of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. We are reminded that it was by Wisdom that the world itself was created, and that the way of Wisdom is an approach to the divine nature itself.

The EIGHTH chapter records the cry of Wisdom from the top of "high places", "where the paths meet", "beside the gates", and at the "coming in" at the doors (The Initiations). It is her great invitation to men not to be fools but to be wise. She closes her invitation by saying that whoever finds her finds life itself, while whoever sins against her wrongs his own soul. The first six verses of the ninth chapter tell how Wisdom builds her house, and makes a feast, and invites even the simplest to be her guests. These are a few ancient pictures of this age-long quest in which you are engaged in a new age. The promises Wisdom makes seem extravagant, but many who have sought her would gladly testify that she keeps her word.

The Book of Proverbs also answers the practical question of how to begin. In the very first paragraph we are told that the fear reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That seems quite reasonable, since the divine mind is the source of it. Knowledge we may learn from earthly teachers, but wisdom we must learn, in one way or another, from the Infinite Himself. It would seem to be proper to infer, then, that an irreligious person could hardly attain wisdom as long as he remains irreligious. Unbelief is a barrier, because unbelief cuts off from us not only much about which we must be wise but the very source of truth itself. One of the receptors

of wisdom is faith, and faith has no place in the program of unbelief.

Remember that wisdom is no small thing, and is not to be considered in a small way. The very fact that it is the discernment of the infinite thought indicates that it is universal. It has no trammels on it. It cannot be crowded into any formal mould. It is freer than the breeze or the starlight. There is plenty of room in it for you to grow, and you must grow in order to keep your hold on it. It is something none but yourself can deny you, and upon which no one and nothing can place a limit. It is free, and no one is forbidden or hindered in the quest for it.

So when you start on the search for wisdom leave your artificial limitations behind. You will find that no person or group has a monopoly on it, or can have. It bears no tags or labels. One who seeks it within the limitations of any preconceived system of belief is like a horse surveying a broad landscape from behind the blinkers of a blind bridle.

One of the first things wisdom will do when it becomes universal enough is to break up our divisions of belief, and give the whole human race a common approach to truth. Under its influence people will discard the error to which they have clung and hold fast to the truth. The result will not be the triumph of any one creed or organization, but of a viewpoint great enough to include all the truth they have all contained and much more of which their adherents had never dreamed. It will be a great day when God's children come to Him as one family, and that day will come when the unity of truth has been arrived at by the mind of wisdom. We have been too slow about this, but it will come.

Of course wisdom is free. It is as available as the air you breathe. You have only to be the kind of person who can receive it and take your share. Unlike the case of material possessions, you do not have to be afraid of taking someone else's share. Not only is there enough for all, each can have as much as he can take of all there is. It is one thing that any number of people can possess at the same time and in the same way, and no one takes any advantage of anyone else.

One more suggestion remains to be given. The universe is the laboratory where the search for wisdom is made. When we enter the laboratory to begin searching for something, we have to leave all our preconceived ideas and personal preferences outside. Truth makes no promise to come in the forms we expect or desire. When we find it, we find it as it is. More often than not it is different from what we expected.

Whoever searches for truth and wisdom must be open-minded. If you search for anything you must be willing to accept it when you find it. Truth is something you cannot change. If it does not fit with the way you have been thinking, you will have to change the way you have been thinking, for you certainly cannot change truth. Learning this will also help to make you wise, for it is certainly unwise to try to fence in truth or insist that it shall come in the shapes, colors, and sizes we prefer.

This is all to the good. When we find any facet of truth and live with it and by it for a time we inevitably discover that anything we could have conceived would not have been half as good. That is one thing we can always assume about truth, that it is exactly right because it is truth. Many limitations have been built around human thinking and we all have our share of them. However deep-seated

or strong they are, they must be put aside. When you go on the quest of truth and wisdom, seek them and accept them for their own sakes. It is hardly necessary to tell you to keep humble when you have found them, for humility is one of the characteristics of wisdom. The show-offs and the braggarts are not found among the wise.



The Chachalaca bird is beautiful, but he is so noisy and vain that men stone him from their dwellings. But the Lolnicte bird is sweet and modest and is loved and protected by all. It is believed that the Lolnicte seeks to dwell near wise people for it is near them that it is most often seen.

We will proceed from this monograph to The Quest for Happiness in our next lesson. Happiness always follows true wisdom.

May your blessings multiply in both.

Your Class Instructor
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